
This is an electronic reprint of the original article.
This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Author(s): Louhiala-Salminen, Leena & Kankaanranta, Anne
Title: Professional Communication in a Global Business Context: The Notion of Global Communicative Competence
Year: 2011
Version: Post print

Please cite the original version:

Louhiala-Salminen, Leena & Kankaanranta, Anne. 2011. Professional Communication in a Global Business Context: The Notion of Global Communicative Competence. IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication. Volume 54, Issue 3. 244-262. ISSN 0361-1434 (printed). DOI: 10.1109/tpc.2011.2161844.

Rights: © 2011 Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineers (IEEE). Personal use of this material is permitted. Permission from IEEE must be obtained for all other uses, in any current or future media, including reprinting/republishing this material for advertising or promotional purposes, creating new collective works, for resale or redistribution to servers or lists, or reuse of any copyrighted component of this work in other work.

All material supplied via Aaltodoc is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of the repository collections is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or educational purposes in electronic or print form. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone who is not an authorised user.

Louhiala-Salminen, L. & Kankaanranta, A. (2011). Professional Communication in a Global Business Context: The Notion of Global Communicative Competence. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, Special issue on Professional Communication in Global Contexts*, 54(3) September, 244-262.

Professional Communication in a Global Business Context: The Notion of Global Communicative Competence

Leena Louhiala-Salminen
Aalto University School of Economics
Runeberginkatu 14-16
00100, Helsinki, Finland
+358.9.43138 338
leena.louhiala-salminen@aalto.fi

Anne Kankaanranta
Aalto University School of Economics
Runeberginkatu 14-16
00100, Helsinki, Finland
+358.9.43138 351
anne.kankaanranta@aalto.fi

Professional Communication in a Global Business Context: The Notion of Global Communicative Competence

Abstract— *On the basis of an extensive survey study conducted among business professionals engaging in global communication, this paper discusses communicative competence. Rapid changes in work environments, particularly advancing globalization and new technology, have highlighted the need for expanding our knowledge of the elements that constitute communicative competence in global encounters. Competence has been investigated by several researchers; however, the language perspective, particularly the language used for international communication, i.e. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), has largely been ignored. Our findings indicate that global communicative competence consists of three layers: multicultural competence, competence in BELF (English as a Business Lingua Franca) and the communicator's business know-how. Based on our findings, we present a model for Global Communicative Competence (GCC), which includes language as a key component. Implications for theory, practice and education include the need for a multidisciplinary approach and the acknowledgement of ELF/BELF as the language of global interaction. ELF/BELF assumes a shared "core" of the English language, but focuses on interactional skills, rapport building and the ability to ask for and provide clarifications.*

Index Terms— *English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), global communicative competence, global professional communication, international business communication.*

Leena Louhiala-Salminen, PhD, Lic.Phil., MSc (Econ), is Professor of International Business Communication at the Aalto University School of Economics (former Helsinki School of Economics) in Finland. She is also Program Director of the Aalto ECON Master's Program in International Business Communication. Her main research interests include the various genres of business communication, the use of English as the business lingua franca, and corporate communication in international contexts.

Anne Kankaanranta, PhD, MSc (Econ), EMBA, is Senior Lecturer and Researcher of English Business Communication (undergraduate level) and International Business Communication (graduate level) at the Aalto University School of Economics (former Helsinki School of Economics). She has also worked as a visiting lecturer in a pre-MBA program at the University of Michigan. Her main research interests include email genres in business communication, the use of English as the business lingua franca, and corporate communication in international contexts.

In recent years, professional communication has experienced dramatic changes due to a combination of societal megatrends, e.g. globalization, gigantic leaps in communication technologies, and the emergence of new types of business structures. In today's complex business

environment, the significance of communication has been acknowledged, and although it is important in business activities in general, the role of communication is fundamental to international encounters, because the complexity of interactions increases. Therefore, global professional communication requires a new type of communicative competence, which has recently been addressed from different perspectives. Melton focuses on rapport in global encounters, presenting an interesting case study on localization; he concludes by highlighting the role of relationship building in present day, often virtual, intercultural relationships [1]. More specifically, Ulijn, Lincke and Karakaya investigate the impact of non-face-to-face media on intercultural negotiations. They claim that empathy, or involvement building, in email negotiation is possible; however, it requires specific effort from the communicators, such as particular explicitness through metacommunicative acts [2].

At the same time globalization has brought about management research where the context and requirements for global communication are investigated, for instance, as perceived by American and Russian managers (e.g. [3]). An educational perspective is offered by Yu, who performed an ethnographic study to explore the need for technical communication in Chinese education [4]. Yu takes the US concept of technical communication - implying American English as the language used - as the starting point, and suggests that technical communication education is highly relevant for Chinese professionals. Interestingly, however, the language requirements seemed to vary by situation, for example, some “companies did not expect perfect writing from the Chinese employees” [4, p. 108].

Although rapid changes in work environments have highlighted the need for more knowledge of the elements that constitute communicative competence in global encounters, one element seems to have been ignored, i.e. the *language* used in global business. For instance, although both Melton and Ulijn et al. employ concepts (e.g. empathy, relationship building) that are deeply dependent on

language use, and Ulijn et al. investigate simulated negotiations in a multilingual group, the choice of language and the effects of that choice on communication are to a large extent taken for granted, without any further problematization.

In other words, when conceptualizing communicative competence, earlier research builds on the ontological and epistemological notion of “a language” that exists and is used in the communicative act being examined, but its role and nature are not addressed, questioned or problematized. This is understandable for two reasons. First, when we discuss communicative competence of native speakers of a language (e.g. in our case, Finnish), there is no need to address the language separately since it is inherently shared and owned by its speakers. Second, when we discuss communicative competence of the learners of a foreign language (e.g. for us, French), the role model is automatically the hypothetical native speaker, whose “language” the learner attempts to emulate so that he/she can interact with native speakers in their particular cultural context.

In today’s global business environment, however, the status of the English language has changed dramatically since it cannot any more be perceived as ‘foreign’ in the same way as French, German, or Chinese, which are studied with the aim of being able to interact with the native speakers of those languages. Rather, English is increasingly used as a shared resource with other, fellow non-native speakers. Therefore, the language largely used for professional communication in present-day global business is the English of non-native speakers, English Lingua Franca (ELF), whose role in (global) communicative competence has hardly been researched (see e.g. [5], [23] - [25]). We argue that one of the consequences – and at the same time prerequisites – of globalization, the widespread use of English as a lingua franca among international communicators, should be given more attention. Based on this argument, the present research project was aimed at increasing our understanding of the role of ELF in global communicative competence.

In this paper, we explore global professional communication in the present-day world of international business and propose a conceptual model for what constitutes ‘global communicative competence’. We will present and elaborate on the findings of a survey focused on the perceptions of globally operating business professionals of the elements and characteristics of their own and their partners’ professional communication. Thus, we aim at contributing to the existing, yet still limited, knowledge of the elements of global professional communicative competence “as rooted in the larger cultural and rhetorical context” [1, p. 229].

The co-editors of the present special issue called for a discussion of the disciplinary roots of professional communication in global contexts and urged researchers to go beyond the theories and practices (characterized as technical communication) which dominate work in North America. We fully agree with the editors on the need to engage in thorough considerations of the various theoretical approaches towards the phenomenon and - coming from a European Business School context ourselves - will next briefly present our disciplinary framework, that of International Business Communication (IBC) for investigating global professional communication.

In IBC, the focus of inquiry is on the communication activities of internationally operating (usually) profit-making enterprises, which can be examined at two levels. At the macro level, the organization’s formal, function-based communications are investigated, and at the micro level, we analyze the communication of individual employees operating across borders in their daily business activities. Although IBC is a new research area, it has gained momentum alongside the advancement of globalization; still, both at the organizational and the individual level, much work remains to be done. As Charles points out, “we ... need research that helps us to better understand the complex process of how people relate to each other across language barriers” [5, p. 279].

However, it has to be emphasized that the macro and the micro phenomena of international business communication are by no means distinctly separate, rather quite the opposite; the two levels together constitute the entire communicative environment of a globally communicating (business) unit and are heavily intertwined. For example, daily encounters between internationally operating business professionals and their business partners from all over the world are continuously constructing the corporate image of the organization. This is often done without reflecting on whether it leads to the desired direction or not. As a concept, corporate image belongs to the macro level, yet it can be affected at both the macro level of origin and the micro level of daily interaction. Language issues are addressed at both levels as well; for example, multinational companies need to address the question of ‘corporate language’, while individual employees may use a variety of languages on a daily basis to get their work done.

“Language” occupies a salient role in European IBC research, which can be explained by the multilingual and multicultural nature of the European continent. For centuries, Europeans have traded with their neighbors of different language backgrounds, and this interaction has called for adequate language knowledge and ability for the multilingual communication to succeed (for more, see [6]). However, IBC is a multidisciplinary research approach that, in addition to language use, heavily emphasizes the significance of the context of communication and applies a variety of methods to explore global professional communication in its multilingual and multicultural context.

The present study was conducted within the framework of IBC as part of a communications project titled “Does Business Know How? The role of business and corporate communication in the business knowhow of globalized and globalizing companies”. The project was part of a larger research program, which investigated business knowhow from a variety of perspectives (see <http://www.aka.fi/en-gb/A/Science-in-society/Research-programmes/Ongoing/LIIKE-2/>). The aim of the entire communications project was to explore the new context and evolving communication

practices and genres in the global business discourse community today. A range of methods were used by eight researchers in 2006-2009 to meet the above aim (see, e.g. [7]- [11]). In the present paper, we report on the findings of the first major part of the project, a large survey study that was designed to identify features contributing to perceptions of communication as being “successful” in global business. The following research question guided the design and analysis of the present survey study: From the perspective of an internationally operating business professional, what elements construct global communicative competence (GCC)?

In what follows, we will first discuss previous literature on communicative competence and the concept of English Lingua Franca and will then present the key findings that identify three layers of global communicative competence (GCC): multicultural competence, competence in BELF (English as a Business Lingua Franca) and the communicator’s business know-how. In the concluding discussion, we will propose a model for GCC and suggest theoretical, practical and educational implications. From the perspective of theoretical understanding, the need for a multidisciplinary approach is emphasized. The implications for education and training include the acknowledgement of ELF as the language of global interaction, which assumes a shared “core” of the English language but focuses on interactional skills, rapport building and the ability to ask for and provide clarifications. Finally, the limitations of the study and possible further avenues for research will be discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To construct a conceptual framework for the study, we will next review earlier literature related to two concepts. First, communicative competence is addressed from the perspectives of language acquisition and communication research. Second, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) research is

presented to add the actual language use of global, professional communicative situations to the approach. At the end of this chapter, the conceptual framework is introduced.

Communicative Competence Communicative competence as a theoretical construct has been investigated in a variety of disciplines, e.g. in linguistic philosophy, foreign language acquisition, and communication studies. Most often, communicative competence is associated with Hymes who, critiquing Chomsky's linguistic competence theory that attributed competence to the mastery of an abstract system of rules based on an innate language apparatus, published his seminal paper discussing linguistic *competence* vs. *performance* in 1972 [12]. Hymes argued that the way language is used for communication has relevance, not only the language itself as a grammatical system [12]. In other words, *competence* is dependent on both the speaker's (tacit) *knowledge* and his/her *ability (for use)* and thus must also include non-cognitive factors such as attitudes, values and motivation [12, p. 64]. Hymes' conceptualization emphasizes the inseparability of cognitive and affective or volatile factors, and thus the – in present thinking fairly obvious – social nature of competence. In Hymes' theory, the underlying, tacit knowledge of the 'rules' available for communication was emphasized, and he indicated four sectors where this knowledge lies:

Whether (and to what degree) the spoken or written text to be communicated

1. is formally *possible*;
2. is *feasible* in virtue of the means of implementation available;
3. is *appropriate* in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated;
4. is in fact *done*, actually performed, and what its doing entails [12 pp. 65-67].

From the perspective of a global professional communicator, the above questions seem highly significant and in daily work situations they need to be repeatedly answered. Let us take an example. When preparing a product launch presentation to an international audience in Turkey, a Swedish engineer first needs to consider feasibility from the language point of view (question 2 above). As

neither Turkish nor Swedish seem feasible for a mixed audience, and also because the speaker's competence in Turkish might be limited, s/he will probably decide to speak English. When presenting, s/he will have to bear in mind the forms and norms of the English language (question 1) – at least to an extent – and at the same time consider the context (question 3), especially the composition and level of knowledge of his/her audience, and be aware of the actual language use related to the particular situation and genre (question 4).

Hymes' theory was further developed by Canale & Swain, who specifically applied it to foreign language teaching and acquisition [13]. Their widely used model distinguishes four areas of communicative competence:

1. *grammatical* competence (phonology, orthography, vocabulary, word and sentence formation)
2. *sociolinguistic* competence (knowledge of sociocultural use of rules; ability to handle settings, topics and communicative functions in different sociolinguistic contexts)
3. *discourse* competence (mastery of understanding and producing texts in the modes of speaking, listening, writing and reading, including textual cohesion and coherence)
4. *strategic* competence (compensatory strategies in case of difficulties in the three areas above; e.g. paraphrase, clarification, slower speech, request for repetition, coping with noise, using fillers)

In his thorough review of the notion of communicative competence throughout the past few decades in English Language Teaching, Peterwagner points out that Canale & Swain do not include *ability for use* in the notion of *competence* but rather see it as part of *performance*, which refers to the realization of the four competences and their interaction in the actual communication event [14; pp. 12-13]. For the purposes of the present paper, the notion of communicative performance alone as understood by Canale & Swain can not serve as the conceptual basis as the data analyzed consist of perceptions of communicative situations and no actual communicative events are studied [13]. In this sense, the present

study focuses on the respondents' "knowledge" of competence rather than "ability for use". However, we agree with Widdowson, who points out that competence and performance may not be at all separate [15]. Peterwagner also concludes that competence must be more than knowledge as, for example, ability for use can in fact be included in both discourse competence and strategic competence; thus competence and ability for use "are inseparably connected, being even mutually prerequisite to each other [14, p. 14]."

Communicative competence has been investigated in communication research in addition to the concept's origins in the fields of linguistic philosophy and foreign language acquisition (e.g. [16], [17]). In communication studies, communicative competence has mostly been defined as *effective* and *appropriate* interaction (e.g. [18], [19], [20]). Effectiveness relates to the other person's reaction to the communicative act, and appropriateness to suitability for situation and social rules. As effectiveness and appropriateness clearly acknowledge the range of roles for different parties to a communicative act, not only the communicator, communication studies take a more holistic approach towards competence compared to the characterizations of competence in linguistically oriented studies. In addition, the context of communication is emphasized. For example, Chen & Starosta argue that the difference between general communicative competence and the communicative competence required in intercultural communication is related to the stronger contextual emphasis of the latter [21]. Spitzberg and Cupach define linguistic competence as "how to use a language" and communicative competence as "knowledge about how to execute one's language knowledge appropriately" [22].

For the present study, the linguistically oriented approaches to communicative competence highlighting the various elements of competence form the necessary basis. In addition, the communication studies discussed above add context to the framework and emphasize actual communicative situations; for example Spitzberg and Cupach conclude: "to be communicatively competent a person must be able to communicate messages appropriately in a given context of interaction" [22, p.219]. However, none of

the approaches discussed in this subsection actually focus on the actual language used in the communicative situation. Therefore, we will next have a look at research on English as a Lingua Franca.

English as a Lingua Franca Although the above discussion of communicative competence seems to touch the essential elements of the notion from various theoretical standpoints, we argue that an important dimension is missing. English used as a shared language among non-native speakers of the language cannot go unnoticed in present-day global professional communication. As pointed out above, earlier research into communicative competence takes “the language” of communication for granted; it is not particularly addressed. For native speakers of a particular language it has no relevance and for foreign language learners of a particular language a reference can be made to their native-speaker-like “knowledge” and “ability for use”. However, when English is used as a shared language by internationally operating business professionals, the notion of language is different: it is not “owned” by anyone nor directly linked to a particular cultural context (e.g. the example presented above of the Swedish engineer giving a presentation in Turkey to an audience with various linguistic and cultural backgrounds). Therefore, we argue that the entire discussion of competence has to be subject to considerations about the “knowledge” and “ability for use” related to English as a Lingua Franca, ELF (see e.g. [26] - [29]).

In the past ten years, ELF has been extensively studied. Seidlhofer presents a survey of the role and characteristics of ELF, and calls for a reconceptualization of the English language. She claims that although the global spread of English and its consequences have long been a focus of critical discussion, less attention has been paid to the nature and forms of the language used [27]. She also argues that there is a ‘conceptual gap’ in the place where ELF should be firmly established in people’s minds; the gap results from the way language still seems to be so closely tied with its native speakers [30] .

To explore and understand ELF interaction, we need to focus on the cultural and behavioural “norms” observed by ELF speakers. For this, there are at least three possible scenarios. Firstly, we could think that ELF communication involves the cultural and behavioural norms associated with the use of English as a native language; secondly, we could consider ELF as a “culture-free” pidgin-like language, and thirdly, ELF could be considered a “linguistic masala” (see [31]) that carries a mixture of the participants’ linguistic and cultural norms with it. The most acknowledged perspective today seems to blend these hypothetical extreme options and assume a constructionist view that stresses the particular ELF situation and its participants.

The two-dimensional description of ELF as both “language stripped bare” and “linguistic masala” by Meierkord has been frequently cited [31]. “Language stripped bare” refers to the tendency of ELF communicators to avoid complex lexis or structures; also, Meierkord found that, for instance, ELF communicators are likely to make use of such politeness phenomena that are experienced as culturally relatively neutral and impersonal. The “linguistic masala” is created by the heterogeneity of ELF users and is shown as a highly dynamic “communicative hybridity” [31, p. 124], i.e. the speakers incorporate their own cultural norms and linguistic backgrounds as well as the situation specific requirements into a mixture that works for them, in the particular situation.

Louhiala-Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta [32] studied ELF encounters within a context of business mergers and introduced the concept of BELF (English as a Business Lingua Franca or Business ELF) to refer to the language that business professionals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds use to conduct their daily work activities. Louhiala-Salminen et al. applied the concept of BELF to emphasize, firstly, the overall communicative goal of the communicators, ultimately that of the business activity, and secondly, the domain of language use. In BELF, the word ‘business’ emphasizes the fact that the domain of use is the business discourse community, and thus it would be inappropriate to consider an ‘ordinary native/non-native speaker’ – a man from

the street - as a linguistic reference point. Instead, BELF is the code for conducting business and therefore the point of reference for competence must be the language of a “business professional”, not that of a “native speaker”.

According Louhiala-Salminen et al., the BELF speakers share the ‘B’, i.e. the context of business, the ‘E’, i.e. the use of English and, to some extent its discourse practices, but are, at the same time, separated by the previous knowledge and experience connected with their various native tongues, their native discourse practices, and their own, often hidden and implicit rules of communication [32, pp. 403-404]. However, recent research has shown that contrary to these forces that may make ELF communication more challenging, there are strong implications of emotional solidarity among the various members speaking ‘ELF’ or ‘BELF’ in their global professional activities (see e.g. [8], [33], [34]). This, again, is a factor that may help to establish trust among communicators and thus enhance the possibilities of communicative success.

In addition to the body of ELF research discussed above, in recent years a number of researchers have been preoccupied with questions concerning the nature and limits of the language used in international interaction. For example, Canagarajah, referring to what he calls LFE, *Lingua Franca English*, makes a valid point by stating that today the speakers of LFE in fact “inhabit and practice other languages and cultures in their own immediate localities” [35, p. 925]. Canagarajah discusses the language proficiency required: “It is unclear what constitutes the threshold level of English proficiency required to join this invisible community. Though some proficiency in English is certainly necessary, it is evident that even those individuals with a rudimentary knowledge can conduct successful communication while further developing their proficiency. This facility is no doubt attributable to the language awareness and practices developed in other contexts of communication with local languages. Multilingualism is at the heart of LFE’s hybrid community identity and speaker proficiency” [35, p. 926]. Canagarajah refers to the respective language

‘varieties’ of *lingua franca* speakers and native speakers and emphasizes that competence in both can be developed and is being developed over time. Similarly, Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta & Planken make a clear distinction between the nature of native-speaker English and the language used at work as a *lingua franca* [7] [8]. Canagarajah concludes that “The competence of LFE speakers is of course distinct. This competence for cross-language contact and hybrid codes derives from their multilingual life “[35 p. 926].

As was pointed out above, most researchers seem to agree that a *lingua franca* is intersubjectively constructed in each specific context of interaction. This on-going negotiation of meaning by the communicators and the overall emergent and elusive nature of the language naturally make it difficult to investigate. Therefore, for example the discussion of the possible boundaries of form that would follow English discourse norms and guarantee intelligibility continues. Canagarajah, for example, argues that variation is at the heart of the *lingua franca* system, and variation is primary; this means that communicators at a particular situation understand each other and proceed with the communication using their own ‘situated’ variants [35]. However, Jenkins, who could presently be characterized as the leading researcher of the linguistic forms of ELF, has introduced the idea of a particular ‘*lingua franca* core’ that is required for the communication to be successful [36].

Research and debate of and around ELF issues continue. In the Introduction to a collection of papers discussing ELF published in 2010, Mauranen argues that “the use of English as a *lingua franca* has become the fastest growing and at the same time the least recognised function of English in the world” [37]. In response, the present paper aims at participating in the ELF discussion and drawing attention to its significance for professional communication and global communicative competence.

Conceptual Framework for the Study For the analysis of our data, we built a conceptual framework that is based on the above discussion of the notions of “communicative competence” and “English as a lingua franca”. To construct the framework, we started out with the very origins of the theorization of communicative competence and assumed Hymes’ parameters of possibility, feasibility, appropriateness and probability (see p. 8 above) as the basis on which to build our analysis. Examining present-day global professional communication from the perspective of the communicators, we posed the question: What is possible, feasible, appropriate and probable?

As discussed above, Hymes’ dimensions were elaborated further by Peterwagner [7]. We agree with Peterwagner’s model that competence includes the dimensions of *knowledge* and *ability*, but found his two elements of competence: (1) grammatical competence, corresponding to Hymes’ possibility, and (2) pragmatic competence, corresponding to Hymes’ feasibility, appropriateness and probability, inadequate for the analysis of the present data. As we investigate the views of internationally operating business professionals in a context where communication is extensively conducted in lingua franca English, we considered the model originally created for language acquisition by Canale & Swain with its four elements (grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence) as more appropriate for our data analysis [13]. However, the holistic approach of the communication studies discussed above (see p. 10) including the dimensions of *effectiveness* and *appropriateness*, and the important role of context in determining these, remain as our underlying assumptions as well. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework for the present study.

Insert Figure 1 about here

As Figure 1 indicates, we emphasize that our respondents' responses have been given and are to be analyzed within the context of global business. In addition, Figure 1 presents both knowledge and ability as inseparable dimensions that together form the basis of competence.

The four dimensions of competence offer a lens through which we analyzed the data. The first, grammatical competence answers the question "what is possible?" and corresponds to Jenkins' argument of the 'core' of the English language required for intelligibility [36]. The second and third, sociolinguistic and discourse competence account for the possibilities of communication offered by word and sentence choice in general in the present-day, multimedial and multicultural environment. They can be used to evaluate the respondents' perceptions of the feasibility, appropriateness and probability of a particular kind of communicative act. Finally, as argued by Canale & Swain, strategic competence is complementary in that it includes compensatory strategies in case of difficulties in the three other areas above [13]. In sum, the four competences were used to analyze the respondents' perceptions on what communicative choices in their work situations are possible, feasible, appropriate and probable.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The findings reported in this paper are based on an online survey study conducted in 2007-2008 in five international, Finland-based corporations. Our research can be characterized as exploratory since we did not measure any particular phenomena but rather wanted to learn more about BELF usage and its role in global communicative competence as perceived by a sample of internationally operating business professionals.

The five companies operated in the fields of logistics (Company A), cargo handling (Company B), IT, business intelligence services and consulting (Company C and E), and welding solutions (Company D). Three of the companies (A, B, C) were listed on the NASDAQ OMX Helsinki Ltd in Finland with net sales ranging from EUR 4.7 billion to 1,700 million and with the number of employees ranging from 34,000 to 9,500 in 2009. The two unlisted companies (D, E), although smaller in size, were also global operators. For example, one of them had subsidiaries in 13 countries, personnel numbered 550, and net sales totalled EUR 80 million.

At the outset, we identified six companies through our institutional and professional networks and approached the CEOs or other members of the board with a request to launch the survey; one company, due to an exceptionally hectic season, refused. Each company appointed a contact person, who then helped us to target the survey to such professionals whose work involved regular international interactions. In practice, it meant that the contact person suggested particular divisions or units with a high level of international operations. In this way, a total of 1916 business professionals were targeted and in total, 987 respondents completed the survey, which corresponds to a response rate of 52% (see Table I for details).

Insert Table I about here

Such a high response rate seems to suggest that the topic was considered important and that the survey instrument was easy to use. In addition, the email message inviting the participants to respond was endorsed by an influential corporate representative, encouraging participation. In the three listed companies, advance information of the survey was also posted on the corporate Intranet.

Survey Instrument The survey instrument was designed in such a way that responding was an easy exercise; the survey was completed on-line and it was administered in English. The

respondents used the keyboard only to answer three open-ended questions, and otherwise, they used the mouse to click on a particular spot on a graph to indicate their responses. The graphs were of two different types: the one-dimensional graphs depicted a continuum between two extremes related to one factor at a time and the two-dimensional graphs with vertical and horizontal axes were able to show the relationship between two factors simultaneously. In other words, the respondents did not use words to give their responses but rather gave them as visual representations by moving a cursor to a spot corresponding to their perception of the given factor(s).

Next, we will present an example of both a one-dimensional and a two-dimensional graph after the respondents had completed their responses to give the reader a similar visual experience as the respondents had (the respective findings will be discussed later). Figure 2 shows a one-dimensional graph, in which only one factor was being evaluated – here, the proportion of communication with native vs. non-native speakers (NS vs. NNS) of English. Due to the design of the instrument, respondents typically rated their responses on a 100-point scale when they estimated percentages, but when they estimated their agreement vs. disagreement with a particular statement, the five-point Likert scale was also used. The inner circles represent the mean values of the evaluations and the outer circles represent standard deviation.

Insert Figure 2 about here

As can be seen from Figure 2, the percentages given in this manner are not precise. Also, as the outer circles representing standard deviation show, the evaluations varied considerably. However, it is important to remember that due to the exploratory nature of the study, we were not looking for exact values (which, in fact, could not be exact as numerical estimates either) but wanted to draw conclusions about general trends. This is why exact percentages cannot be given when we discuss

the actual findings of the survey, rather we have to suffice with descriptions of relationships and relative values.

Figure 3 below is an example of a two-dimensional, four-quadrant graph after the respondents had completed their responses. It depicts the views of the respondents on possible success factors of their global communication.

Insert Figure 3 about here

The respondents were given three statements, each of which they rated simultaneously according to two factors, i.e. the statement's *Importance* (vertical or y axis) and the respondent's *Present competence* (horizontal or x axis) with values ranging from 1 to 100. The three statements that were rated described the respondents' perceptions of the possible "success" features of BELF communication: having a wide vocabulary of English, using grammatically correct language, and knowing the English vocabulary of their own business area.

As can be seen from Figure 3, the three dots depict the perceived relationship between the two factors (i.e. the perceived importance of and the respondent's present competence in the possible success factors described in the three statements). Here, the dots appear in the top right hand quadrant of the graph, which indicates that the respondents had rated both factors high. The relative importance of the three statements is demonstrated by their positions in relation to each other. The results obtained from such graphs thus reflect the respondents' perceptions of the given factors visually although exact values are also available, as the text below the figure shows.

Survey Questions Excluding the background data and the three open-ended questions, the survey consisted of six items, each of which contained three to five related questions or statements, in total 23. The six items addressed the respondents' professional communication in the global context such as the characteristics of the English language competence required at work, the role of 'culture',

audience focus, and their views of the relationship between communication knowhow and business knowhow. In addition, the respondents were asked to indicate how they would rank some characteristics of business communication that textbooks typically consider effective (e.g. directness, clarity, politeness; see e.g. Munter [28]). Finally, in the three open-ended questions of the survey, the respondents were asked to further elaborate on the perceived communicative “success” in the global business environment, which called for an opinion about the factors that (1) make communication succeed, (2) make communication fail, and (3) confirm that a communicative act succeeded in the globalized business environment.

FINDINGS

In what follows, we report on our findings of global communicative competence (GCC). The responses were analyzed through the lens of the conceptual framework constructed on the basis of earlier research (see Figure 1, p. 15). The discussion of the findings is divided into four focus areas, i.e. English language competence and genre knowledge (relate to grammatical, discourse and strategic competence), the role of ‘culture’ and audience (relate to sociolinguistic and discourse competence), characterizations of “successful” communication (relate to sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence), and business knowhow (relates to sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences, and situates the responses into the context of global business). Before moving on to the four focus areas, a few words about the respondents of our study are in order.

Respondent Background Background data collected from the respondents comprised, in addition to the basic demographics, information about their language use, communication partners, and the time spent on various communication media at work.

Most of the respondents (60%) were under 40 years of age and male respondents accounted for 75% of the sample. Although the number of different native languages amounted to 31, the native tongue of almost 40% of the respondents was Finnish, and overall, Western European languages such as German (11%), Norwegian (8%), and Swedish (6%) as native language dominated. They accounted for 85% of all native languages. The most common non-European languages (Chinese, Korean and Tamil) represented 13% of the sample, of which Chinese dominated with 7%. Over 80% of the respondents had a university degree: 46% had a Bachelor level degree, 33% a Master's and 3% above Master's, reflecting the nature of their work. Job titles were not specifically asked about as we wanted to keep the survey as simple as possible and we were interested in the perceptions of internationally operating business professionals in general.

Of language use and communication partners our respondents reported the following. First, the majority needed two languages at work: their mother tongue and English. Although the respective amounts in the daily work varied considerably, the respondents estimated that they used the mother tongue somewhat more than English. Second, English was mostly used with non-native speakers (NNS) of the language rather than with native speakers (NS); in other words, the language dominating the encounters could be characterized as BELF (English as Business Lingua Franca). Indeed, on average, BELF was used approximately three times the amount of English with NSs (see Figure 2 above). Approximately one third of the respondents reported that they knew a third language but its average share of the total language use at work was estimated to be less than 10%. However, in the open questions of the survey the respondents commented on the benefits of knowing even only a few words in the communication partner's mother tongue since it was perceived to contribute to creating rapport. According to one of the respondents: *"Not only 'broken English' but other foreign languages are very important. I.e. in France and Italy you can't be*

successful with English only. My contacts in South European countries are successful because I speak other languages than English and German. I am able to hear messages ‘between the lines’”.

The time spent on different communication media/situations varied considerably. On average, the respondents estimated that, on a regular working day, most time was spent on emailing and in informal discussions with colleagues and somewhat less on scheduled meetings and telephoning.

English Language Competence and Genre Knowledge The competence of the English language needed at work was addressed from different perspectives in the survey, and two key messages stand out. First, competence in English was taken for granted; it was perceived as any other necessary tool to do the work. And second, grammar was not perceived nearly as important for successful communication as specialized vocabulary and related genres. Although a clear majority of the respondents were of the opinion that they would not be able to work without knowing English and that it was important that the other party knew English as well, comments related to the knowledge of the language in the open question about the success factors for globalized communication were few. There, the basic message seemed to be that “*adequately*” good grammar and vocabulary were sufficient. This could be interpreted as such competence of both grammar and vocabulary that enables communication without any considerable effort from the communicating parties (grammatical competence and part of discourse competence in the conceptual framework).

Interestingly, when the respondents compared the importance of knowing grammar, wide general vocabulary and the specific vocabulary of their business field (see Figure 3), they perceived grammar as clearly less important for successful communication than the other two. Neither did they rate their present competence of grammar particularly high in contrast to their competence of

the field-specific vocabulary. Although all three possible success factors appear in the top right hand corner of the graph indicating that they were all perceived as important and the competence as fairly high, the respective positions of “grammar” and “specific vocabulary”, in particular, show a marked difference.

In other words, the shared vocabulary of the specific field - and the shared genres and genre knowledge which such vocabulary implies (see e.g. [38]) – were perceived as essential for doing the work. The answers to the open questions about successful and unsuccessful communication showed that genre knowledge (falls within discourse competence in the conceptual framework) also comprised the ability to decide what to communicate and to whom, when to communicate and how. For example, choosing the appropriate channel and knowing how to use it were prerequisites for work and thus essential genre knowledge in the field. One of the respondents emphasized the shared understanding of the genre rules as follows: *“If communication does not take place, business does not take place.”*

Related to this, the value of face-to-face meetings and personal contacts overall seemed to be shared among the respondents, especially at the beginning of a relationship. In such meetings, however, the practice of checking and re-checking for understanding and confirming issues in email after meetings was perceived as something that had to be *“typically”* done, as the following quotation shows: *“Always ask questions to clarify if the meaning is not crystal clear to you”*. This ability to make sure, clarify and request for repetition emerged as a significant competence element in the open answers. It was described both at the level of one communicative act (e.g. asking questions in a meeting as long as understanding is achieved) or in a chain of communicative acts (e.g. confirm issues by subsequent telephone calls or emails). This element clearly falls in the category of “strategic competence” in the conceptual framework.

In addition to the forms and norms of the English language and knowledge of genre rules, two specific skills (that would best fall under the category sociolinguistic competence in the framework) related to the use of different ‘Englishes’ used by the multitude of non-native speakers of the language were raised: (1) understanding different accents and (2) listening skills. Although a good half of our respondents did not consider native-like pronunciation essential for their communication at work and felt that they were slightly more successful with communication with non-native speakers, our predominantly Western European respondents still considered the accents of their Chinese and Indian colleagues challenging. This challenge may be partly due to the fairly recently established business contacts with those countries, since European accents hardly raised any comments. Hence, it could be expected that when the business relationship grows older with more frequent contacts, the accents of the business partners would not be considered as challenging any more. The emphasis on listening skills may be related to this phenomenon or to the overall need of being more attentive as a foreign language to all parties is being used. One of the respondents gave the following as the only requirement for successful communication: “*listen, listen, listen!*”.

The Role of ‘Culture’ and Audience To succeed in their communication in a global business environment, in which various ‘cultures’ of the other party were at play, the respondents emphasized the communication partner’s role in the organization, as Figure 4 shows. The organizational role was perceived as more important than the particular corporate culture and the partner’s national culture, although, again all three were placed in the upper right-hand corner of the four-quadrant graph. Cultural issues were deemed significant today, and practically equally significant in the future.

Insert Figure 4 about here

In the open questions of the survey, respect of and sensitivity towards other cultures as well as appreciation of “*the different ways of doing things*” were highlighted and the importance of the role of the other party emerged in comments about the value of personal contacts, of knowing the other party. Some of the respondents were also well aware of the effect that ‘culture’ may have on discourse practices, i.e. they implied sociolinguistic and discourse competence in their responses, when they talked about understanding and accommodating to representatives of some other ‘cultures’, who were more talkative vs. silent, more linear vs. circular, or more abrupt vs. ‘polite’. Since work in the domain of international business automatically implies a multicultural and multilingual working environment, interactions with colleagues and business partners call for accommodation skills and flexibility – from both parties in the communicative act. Audience focus was linked to the perceived importance of the role of the other party. The responses to a question that asked about acknowledging the needs of the audience can be seen in Figure 5.

Insert Figure 5 about here

As Figure 5 shows, the results regarding the other’s factual and interactional perspective showed similar tendencies. Along the two dimensions of occurrence and importance, the respondents’ perception was that they tried to accommodate to their communication partners’ factual and interactional needs to a greater extent than what the partners did. In other words, they needed both discourse and sociolinguistic competence. The figure also shows that factual business needs were considered more important in both cases than the interactional needs of creating rapport and a positive atmosphere. These findings suggest that the respondents considered it important to step into the partner’s shoes and seemed to recognize similar behavior in their partners, although not quite as often as in their own behavior.

Characterizations of “Successful” Communication In their rankings of the success factors in international communication, the respondents showed agreement. The three factors generally considered important for effective business communication (e.g. [39]), i.e. directness, clarity, and politeness, were presented to the respondents in three sentences as follows: *In my international communication, to get what I want, I need to be direct/clear/polite*. In addition, a fourth factor was used, *supporting facts with explanations*, to find out about the need for argumentation and explanations.

Perhaps not unexpectedly, the values given indicated fairly strong agreement with the respective statements, as Figure 6 shows. However, although the differences were not very large, ‘clarity’ was without question the most important feature to guarantee communicative success, which could be characterized as part of the discourse competence of a global business professional. When dealing with multilingual and multicultural audiences, other factors (such as e.g. politeness) only come after the clarity of a message has been ensured. Here, we could also argue that sociolinguistic competence is relevant; with a particular audience, politeness may be more important than clarity, with other audiences directness might come first.

Insert Figure 6 about here

Concepts such as directness, clarity and politeness naturally have various interpretations depending on the situation and the overall context. The answers to the open questions gave us some further illumination (for more on this, see [29]) to how our respondents understood directness, clarity and politeness. Directness, for example, was characterized as “*putting the most important point at the top, being brief and to the point*”. This understanding also appeared in such comments that emphasized the importance of not wasting the communication partner’s time by “*beating about the bush*”. Clarity, then, seemed to refer to the explicitness in communication and the ability to

simplify, as the following two quotes show: *“Being able to highlight the essence of the message”* and *“Have to define clearly what you want and what your aim is.”* However, the value of repetition in ensuring clear communication was also brought up to the extent that a few respondents even talked about *“hypercommunication”*. Related to this, the importance of asking clarifying questions and of checking, double-checking, confirming and reconfirming business issues was emphasized. The third factor, politeness, was seemingly conceptualized in a number of ways by our respondents. Overall, we would argue that it referred to being *“positive, friendly and constructive”*, which meant that the facts were not considered sufficient alone but, for example, traditional small talk and the use of greetings in the establishment of personal contact was essential. One of the respondents expressed it like this: *“There should always be time for ‘hello’ and ‘best regards’”*. Another went into a more detailed reflection: *“You must ‘hit it off’ with your counterpart. This means common interests through small talk etc. Business talk only is not enough. You must also create trust and credibility and understand the other party’s personality.”* Overall, we would argue that since the personal contact, positive attitude, and focus on the communication partner and his/her needs received so many comments, it reflects a strong orientation to people and thus emphasis on politeness, the lubricant of social relationships.

Business Knowhow Business knowhow seldom emerged explicitly in the answers to open questions. Since the respondents were business professionals, we interpret this finding to suggest that business knowhow was taken for granted; it was perceived as shared knowledge among the respondents and did not need to be raised separately. For example, the overwhelmingly most popular answer to the question: “How do you know that you have succeeded in your communication?” was *“getting the job done”*. Such an answer reveals a myriad of contexts and situation specific factors related to the business at hand (e.g. facts, figures), parties involved (e.g.

credibility, trust), interactions (e.g. meetings, video conferences), and communications (e.g. rhetoric, genres). One comment aptly describes the challenge of trying to define business knowhow: “*Know your business. Know the organization. Know the issue.*” For an outsider, a non-business person, such “knowing” would be outright impossible. However, we would argue that a business practitioner would know exactly what that “knowing” means in his/her particular case and would also know what it means in a business context in general.

Another respondent, although focusing on different cultures, crystallized business knowhow in this way: “*International ‘business culture’ is so strong that it overrides national cultures.*” Here, ‘business culture’ carries a lot of meaning, which is next to impossible to decipher without in-depth interviews. However, some explicit indication of the importance of business knowhow could be established, for example, on the agreement among the respondents that using English between non-native speakers for business purposes, i.e. using BELF, usually worked well if the topic was familiar to both parties. In other words, knowledge of the business principles in general and the specific area of the business professional’s expertise in particular were perceived as prerequisites for effective communication. These competences fall within the areas of sociolinguistic and discourse competence in our conceptual framework. Further, in case of problems related to business practices, conventions, and ethics the professional needs to possess strategic competence to recognize such problems and be able to clarify them.

An explicit indication of the inseparable association between business knowhow and communicative competence is further illustrated in Figure 7, which demonstrates to what extent the respondents perceived communication knowhow as an element of business knowhow.

Insert Figure 7 about here

As Figure 7 shows, the respondents agreed strongly with the following three statements related to communication as business knowhow: *(1) communication knowhow is an essential part of business knowhow, (2) communication skills are getting more important in my work, and (3) business is a communication-based activity*. However, only half of them agreed with the following statement: *for my organization to succeed, some people specialize in business issues, others is communication*.

In this chapter we have discussed the findings that indicate how globally operating business professionals view global communicative competence (GCC). The respondents regarded their communicative competence as an essential element interlinked in their total professional competence, and they emphasized the significance of knowing the audience and being able to accommodate to “different ways of doing things”. They also valued “clarity” very high. Their attitude towards the language used in global professional communication was extremely pragmatic: it will have to get the job done. The next chapter discusses the implications of the present findings.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we have presented a theoretical discussion of the concepts “communicative competence” and “lingua franca”, and discussed the findings of a study that investigated the perceptions of business professionals of the elements of communicative competence required in their global professional communication. Now, we will first suggest implications for communication theory and then introduce our views of practical and educational implications. In conclusion, the limitations of the study and possible further avenues for research will be discussed.

Implications for Communication Theory On the basis of previous literature in language and communication studies, we drew a conceptual framework to guide the analysis. Combining conceptualizations from linguistic philosophy and foreign language acquisition, and also drawing from insights in communication studies, we justified the use of Canale & Swain's four elements of competence as the main categories in which the data would be examined. However, three other aspects in the framework must be emphasized. First, we explicitly contextualize the study in global business communication, in other words we do not claim that the questions asked, results achieved or implications drawn would necessarily be valid in another context. Second, the framework highlights that the four questions posed by Hymes of the possibility, feasibility, appropriateness and probability of a linguistic realization of a communicative act were regarded as fundamental for our analysis [12]. Third, similarly to Peterwagner, we acknowledge that knowledge (of a language) and ability for use (of that language) are two distinct components of communicative competence but in practice inseparable from each other [14].

The conceptual framework applied for the analysis and the findings of the empirical study form the basis for what we propose as a model for Global Communicative Competence (GCC) in a business context. The model is illustrated in Figure 8. The model depicts our view of the elements required for global communicative competence, i.e. successful communication in the global business context.

Insert Figure 8 about here

As Figure 8 shows, the innermost part of the model represents the GCC of a business professional but for it to exist, the outer layers from inside out of (1) multicultural competence, (2) BELF competence and (3) business knowhow are necessary. The layers are briefly discussed below.

First, we have shown that for global communication to succeed, a business professional needs to have adequate sociolinguistic and discourse competence for the multicultural environment. This refers to the communicator's sensitivity towards "different ways of doing things" and includes such issues as listening skills, accommodation skills and understanding different accents and varieties of language. Multicultural competence stems from the acknowledgement of factors related to national, corporate and/or professional cultures as fundamentals of any communicative event, and enables the flexibility and tolerance needed for GCC to succeed. It also seems evident that competence (in any degree) in more than one language increases multicultural competence.

Second, competence in BELF seems to be different from that of a "natural" language, which is spoken with its native speakers. The users of English as a lingua franca in a particular situation are capable of making use of the situation-specific 'core' of the English language. At the same time, they use highly specialized, shared terms and concepts to adapt to the forms and norms of the language required in each business situation. We argue that in some contexts this may mean very basic English with plenty of "language errors". In other situations, BELF competence refers to language use which can be characterized as "standard English", possibly affected by the discourse competences of the particular communicators in other languages. BELF competence also includes the element of strategic competence—being aware of the need to explicate and ascertain messages. Successful BELF communicators ask questions, repeat utterances and use more than one channel to achieve shared understanding.

Third, the outermost layer of business knowhow is fundamental for GCC (global communicative competence). We have placed it as the overall surface of the model, reflecting the fact that it cannot be separated from communicative competence but it is an integral part of the entity.

The GCC model contributes to existing communication theory in at least two ways. First, it highlights the need for a multidisciplinary approach to understand the requirements of communicative competence for present-day, business professionals working in global contexts. For this understanding it is necessary to both draw from communication theory, e.g. the notions of appropriateness and effectiveness, and consider linguistic research which enables us to focus on the actual language used in the communicative act at hand.

Second, our model indicates that communicative competence cannot be separated from the field-specific professional competence, referred to in this study as business knowhow. Thus, in the context of global business communication, the communicative competence required is constructed of the three elements of multicultural competence, BELF competence and business know-how that are interlinked and subject to the particular circumstances of each business situation.

Implications for Practice and Education Our study bears some significant implications for both practice and education. These implications build on the theoretical model suggested in Figure 8 and focus on raising awareness first and foremost. The practical and educational implications are closely related and intertwined. Below we will first discuss these implications from the perspectives of language proficiency and ‘traditional’ business communication skills and secondly consider the implications for building rapport and trust in communication. Thirdly, we will highlight the most significant issues to be learnt for education and training in GCC, and finally will consider what the implications for the macro level of communication (the communications function of a business or organization) might mean.

At the micro level of International Business Communication (see p. 5), i.e. for the global communicators, there are implications related to all four components of competence. Concerning

grammatical competence and discourse competence, our study showed that grammar does not need to be perfect for an internationally operating business professional but the requirements of this component are highly situated. Therefore, we would agree with Jenkins on the ‘core’ of the English language being the shared element in ELF communication, which is a framework that could be adopted as the new paradigm for communication training targeted at present and future business professionals [36]. Rather than investing resources in flawless language proficiency, the focus should be shifted towards skills that would contribute to enhancing students’ and communicators’ global communicative competence more effectively. Therefore, such competence areas that belong to *sociolinguistic and strategic competence*, for example, interactional skills, rapport building and the ability to ask for and provide clarifications should be in focus.

However, emphasis should simultaneously be maintained on ‘traditional’ business communication skills of directness, clarity and politeness that enhance effectiveness (see e.g. [39]). These skills could in fact be associated with *business knowhow*, as in the midst of information overflow, it is becoming more and more important for knowledge workers to be able to attract and keep attention by simplifying their discourse, focusing on the essentials, and making the message as explicit and easily accessible as possible. In addition, the new complex context requires an ability to use business genres in global business, to adapt them to precise business situations.

In the present networked and globalized economy, one of the greatest challenges for global communicators is to be able to create rapport and establish credibility and trust with their communication partners. These features were emphasized by the professionals in our study over and over again. Although recent research has shown that the initial emotional solidarity among BELF users is strong since they all share the experience of having learned and operating in a foreign language, the significance of improving interactional skills cannot be underestimated (see e.g. [8]).

Interestingly, this emotional solidarity among non-native speakers (NNS) may well affect the position of power that native speakers (NS) of English have had in NS/NNS communication. Typically, NSs have been reported to gain the upper hand in communication because of their superior language skills (see e.g. [32]). In multicultural communication, when the criterion for effective communication is not the command of grammatical forms and structures but rather the command of the ability to build rapport and trust, the NSs may in fact lose some of their taken-for-granted power and become more equal players in the new global business arena.

For educating students and training practitioners in global communicative competence, three aspects need special emphasis. First, communicators need to be prepared and equipped to check for understanding and make clarifying questions. Second, since communicators need to show tolerance towards different Englishes, they should ideally receive some training in identifying and adjusting to different pronunciations, accents, and intonations of English. Third, they should be aware of and flexible towards the various mother tongue discourse practices reflected in ELF communication. However, since knowledge of business knowhow was taken for granted by the respondents, we suggest that it consists of tacit knowledge gained through experience in professional contexts.

Finally, although the present study investigated a micro level phenomenon (communicative competence) there are implications for the macro level as well, i.e. for companies and other organizations managing their global communications. First, the study further highlights the significant position of communication and communicative competence as essential parts of the knowhow required for managing a business. In addition, the role of other languages than the organization's own "home language" and/or English in globally operating organizations should be recognized and their value appreciated for business success.

Limitations and Further Study The limitations of our survey study reflect its nature at the cross-roads of quantitative and qualitative inquiry. On the quantitative side, the study is limited by its rigid structure and the questions, which were defined at the start of the research project and which could not be changed since. In hindsight, we could have used some controversial assertions rather than giving rather simple alternatives to the respondents. Also, some questions would have benefited from greater detail; for instance, the effect of the number of participants in face-to-face encounters could have produced interesting differences in the nature of communication. On the qualitative side, then, the weakness lies with the choice of some particular words, whose interpretation by the respondents may have been different from what we intended; as an example the following three words: directness, clarity and politeness as BELF success factors. Although they were carefully chosen to describe particular phenomena in business communication generally deemed essential, on the basis of our other studies we have identified the problem of the different interpretations assigned to the words [e.g.8]. For example, although Chinese business professionals perceive their own English business communication as ‘direct’, their Finnish colleagues characterize it as ‘indirect’ [40]. Finally, our study does not only have a Western European bias but also a Finnish one since around 40% of the respondents were Finns.

The avenues for further study are closely connected to the limitations. First, the respondent population could be expanded to other geographical areas and to particular professional groups. For example, comparisons could be performed between professionals with engineering vs. business degrees operating globally. Second, the effect of the extremely rapidly advancing communication technologies on the global communication competence of internationally operating business professionals invites further studies since these technologies are the ultimate enablers of global communication.

REFERENCES

- [1] J.Melton, "Going global: A case study of rhetorical invention, packaging, delivery, and feedback collection," *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, vol. 52, no. 3, pp. 229–242, 2009.
- [2] J.M. Ulijn, A. Lincke, and Y. Karakaya, "Non-face-to-face international business negotiation: How is national culture reflected in this medium?" *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 126–137, 2001.
- [3] A.V. Matveev and P.E. Nelson, "Cross cultural communication competence and multicultural team performance: Perceptions of American and Russian managers," *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, vol. 4, no.2, pp. 253-271, 2004.
- [4] H.Yu, "Developing technical communication education for Chinese industry professionals: Preliminary findings and suggestions," *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 102–115, 2010.
- [5] M. Charles, "Language matters in global communication," *Journal of Business Communication*, vol. 44, no.3, pp. 260-282, 2007.
- [6] M.Charles, "Europe. Oral Business Communication," *Business Communication Quarterly*, vol. 61, no.3, pp. 85-93, 1998.
- [7] A. Kankaanranta and L. Louhiala-Salminen, "'English? – Oh, it's just work!': A study of BELF users' perceptions," *English for Specific Purposes*, vol. 29, pp. 204-209, 2010.
- [8] A. Kankaanranta and B. Planken, "BELF competence as business knowledge of internationally operating business professionals," *Journal of Business Communication*, vol. 47, no.4, pp. 380-407, 2010.
- [9] S. Huttunen, "Problematic talk: the role of multiple understandings in project meetings," Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Languages and Communication, Aalto University School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland, 2010.
- [10] S. Lehmuskallio, "Intranet editors as corporate gatekeepers and agenda setters," *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 95-111, 2008.
- [11] M. Heikkinen and L. Louhiala-Salminen, "International communication for a defensive purpose: Ideology and language awareness at work" in *The Ascent of International Business Communication*, L. Louhiala-Salminen and A. Kankaanranta, Eds. Helsinki: Helsinki School of Economics, 2009, pp.87-113.
- [12] D. Hymes, "On Communicative Competence," in *Linguistic Anthropology. A Reader*, A. Duranti, Ed. Malden, USA & Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1972, pp 53-73.
- [13] M. Canale & M Swain, "Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing," *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 27-31, 1980.
- [14] R. Peterwagner, *What is the Matter with Communicative Competence?* Wien: Lit Verlag, 2005.
- [15] H. Widdowson, *Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- [16] R.Bostrom, *Competence in Communication*. Beverly Hills, SA: Sage.1984.
- [17] J.M. Wiemann, "Explication and test of a model of communicative competence," *Human Communication Research*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 195-213, 1977.
- [18] D.J. Canary and B.H. Spitzberg, "A model of the perceived competence of conflict strategies," *Human Communication Research*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 630-649, 1989.
- [19] F. Flauto, "Walking the talk: The relationship between leadership and communication competence," *Journal of Leadership & Organizational studies*, vol. 6, no. 1-2, pp. 86-97.
- [20] J.M. Wiemann and P. Backlund, "Current theory and research in communicative competence," *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 50, no.1, pp. 185-199, 1980.

- [21] G-M. Chen & W. Starosta "Intercultural communication competence. A synthesis." in *The Global Intercultural Communication Reader*, M.K. Asante, Y. Miike & J. Yin, Eds. New York & London: Routledge, 2008, pp. 215-238
- [22] B.H.Spitzberg and W.R.Cupach, *Interpersonal Communication Competence*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1984.
- [23] K. St. Amant, "When culture and rhetoric contrast: Examining English as the international language of technical communication," *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, vol. 42, no.4, pp. 297-300, 1999.
- [24] C. Nickerson, "Editorial: English as a lingua franca in international business contexts," *English for Specific Purposes*, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 367-380, 2005.
- [25] S. Ehrenreich, "English as a Business Lingua Franca in a German multinational corporation," *Journal of Business Communication*, vol. 47, no.4, pp. 408-431, 2010.
- [26] J. Jenkins, *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- [27] B. Seidlhofer, "Research perspectives on teaching English as a lingua franca," *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 24, pp. 209-239, 2004.
- [28] A. Mauranen, "A rich domain of ELF: The ELFA corpus of academic discourse," *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 145-159, 2006.
- [29] B Björkman, "From code to discourse in spoken ELF," in *English as a Lingua Franca. Studies and Findings*, A. Mauranen & E. Ranta , Eds. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010, pp. 225-253.
- [30] B. Seidlhofer, "Closing a conceptual gap: the case for a description of English as a lingua franca," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol.11, no.2, pp. 133-158, 2001.
- [31] C. Meierkord, "'Language stripped bare' or 'linguistic masala'? Culture in lingua franca communication," in *Lingua Franca Communication*, K. Knapp and C. Meierkord, Eds. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002, pp. 109-134.
- [32] L. Louhiala-Salminen, M. Charles and A. Kankaanranta, "English as a lingua franca in Nordic corporate mergers: Two case companies," *English for Specific purposes*, vol. 24, no.4, pp. 401- 421, 2005.
- [33] J. Kassis Henderson, "The implications of language boundaries on the development of trust in international management teams," in *Organizational Trust, A Cultural Perspective*, M.Saunders, D. Skinner, G. Dietz, N. Gillespie, and R.J.Lewicki , Eds. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 358-382.
- [34] K. Lagerstrom and M. Andersson, "Creating and sharing knowledge within a transnational team – the development of a global business system," *Journal of World Business*, vol. 38, no.2, pp. 84- 95, 2003.
- [35] S. Canagarajah, "Lingua franca English, multilingual communities, and language acquisition," *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 91, no. 5, pp. 923–939, 2007.
- [36] J. Jenkins, *The Phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- [37] A. Mauranen, "Introduction," in *English as a Lingua Franca. Studies and Findings*, A.Mauranen and E. Ranta , Eds. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010, pp. 1-7.
- [38] C. Berkenkotter and T.N. Huckin, *Genre Knowledge in Disciplinary Communication: Cognition, Culture, Power*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995.
- [39] M. Munter, *Guide to Managerial Communication. Effective Business Writing and Speaking*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2009.
- [40] W. Lu and A. Kankaanranta, "Is there a "yes" or "no" for a Chinese BELF speaker? – The effect of cultural identity on Chinese BELF," submitted to a special issue for *Journal of Rhetoric, Professional Communication, & Globalization* , forthcoming.

Figures 1-8 and Table I :

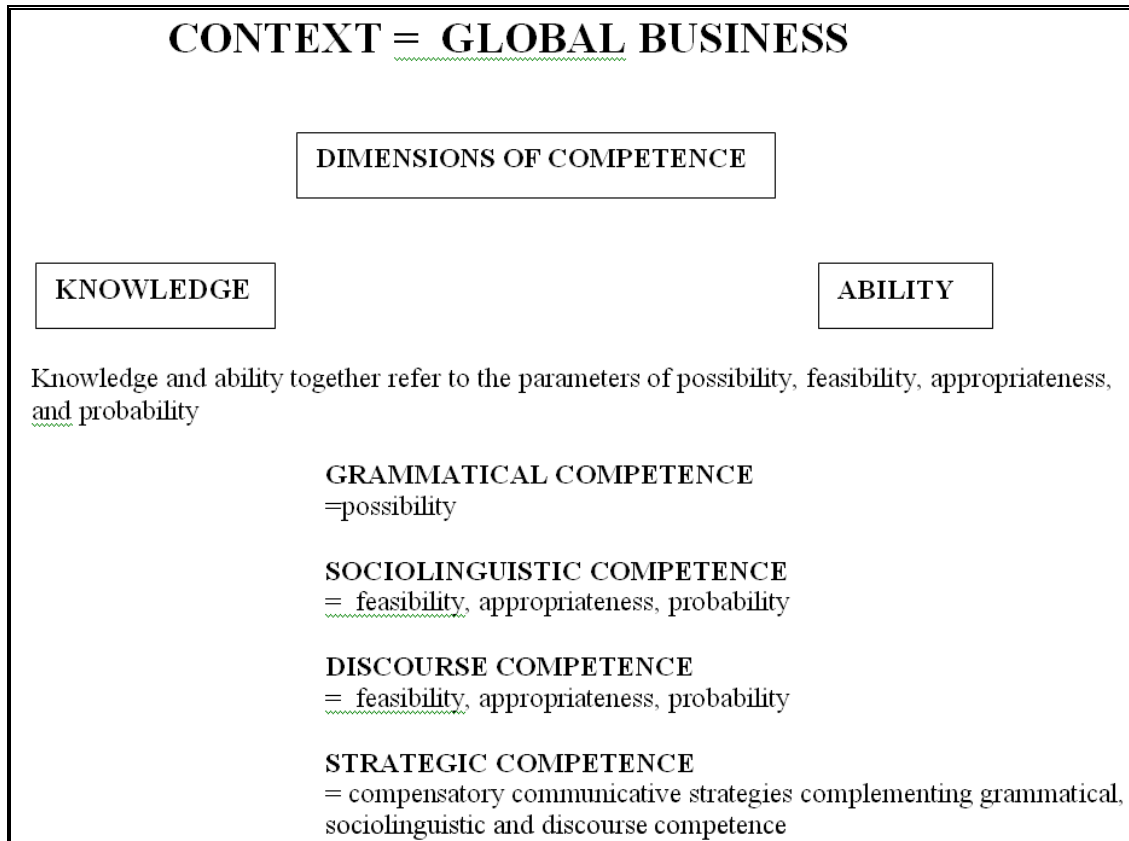
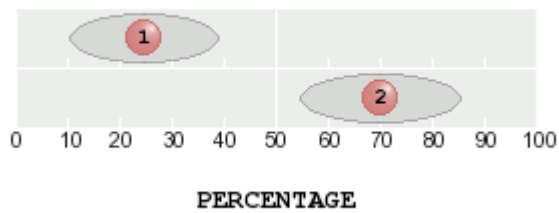


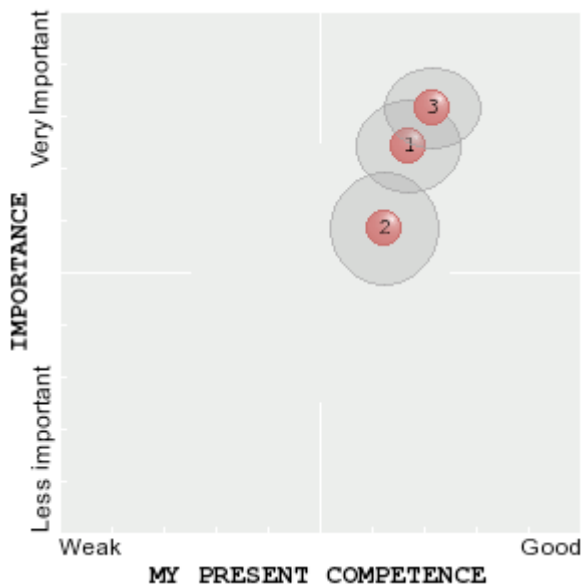
Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the analysis (adapted from Peterwagner's dimensions of communicative competence [7, p. 13]).



What percentage of your communication in English takes place with

- (1) Native speakers of English? ($x=24.7$)
- (2) Non-native speakers of English? ($x=70.2$)

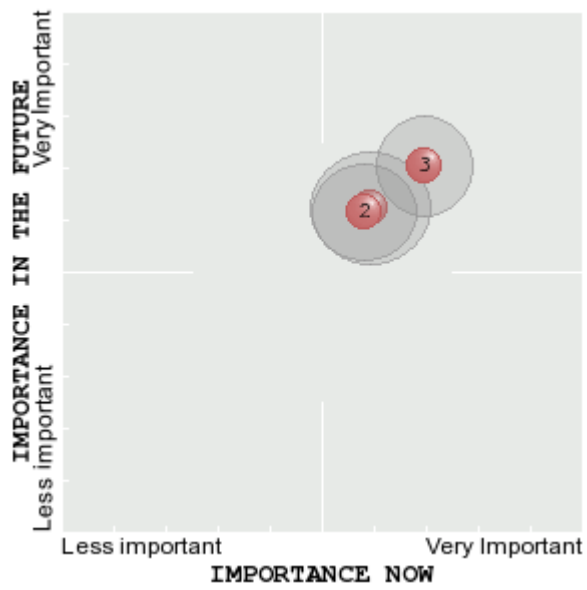
Figure 2. Example of a one-dimensional graph.



For my communication to succeed, it is important that

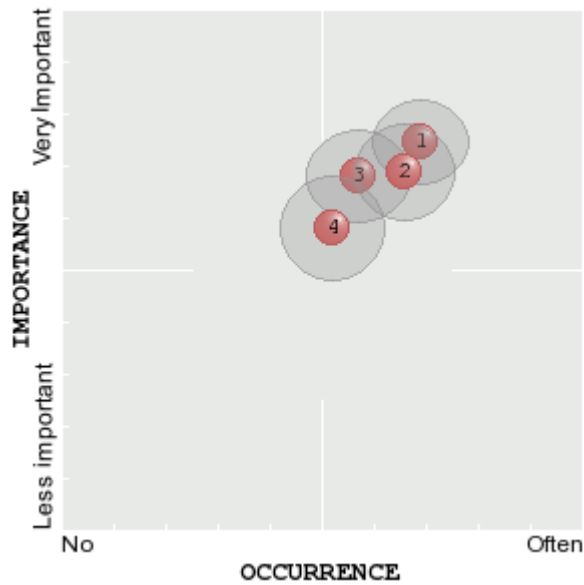
- (1) I have a wide vocabulary of English ($x=67.1$, $y=74.1$)
- (2) the English I use is grammatically correct ($x=62.5$, $y=58.5$)
- (3) I know the English vocabulary of my own business area ($x=71.9$, $y=81.4$).

Figure 3. Example of a two-dimensional graph.



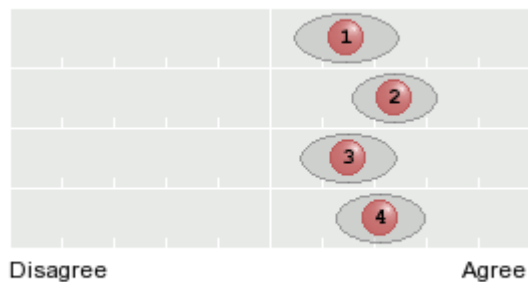
- (1) To communicate successfully, I have to know the other party's national culture. (x=59.3, y=62.2)
 (2) To communicate successfully, I have to know the corporate culture of the other party. (x=58.2, y=61.2)
 (3) To communicate successfully, I have to know the other party's role in the organization. (x=69.9, y=70.1)

Figure 4. Cultural issues in communication.



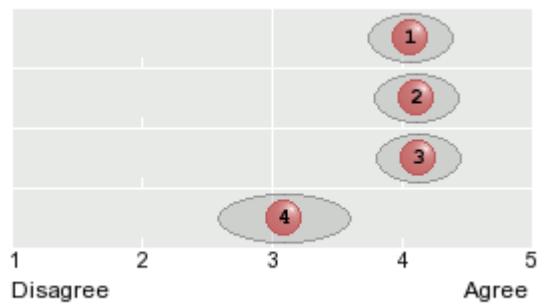
- (1) When I communicate, I try to see the matter from the other person's perspective as well. (x=69.1, y=74.3)
 (2) When I communicate, I try to make the other person feel good. (x=65.9, y=68.8)
 (3) When someone communicates with me, (s)he tries to understand my point of view. (x=57.1, y=67.8)
 (4) When someone communicates with me, (s)he tries to make me feel good. (x=51.9, y=58.0)

Figure 5. Audience focus.



- (1) To get what I want, I have to be very direct in my communication. (x= 64.5)
 (2) To get what I want, I have to pay a lot of attention to delivering the message clearly. (x=74.2.)
 (3) To get what I want, I need to be very polite. (x=64.9)
 (4) To get my message across, I have to support my facts with explanations. (x=72.5)

Figure 6. "Success" factors in international communication.



- (1) Communication knowhow is an essential part of business knowhow. (76.9)
 (2) Communication skills are getting increasingly important in my work. (77.9)
 (3) Business is a communication based activity. (78.2)
 (4) For my organization to succeed, some people specialize in business issues, others in communication. (52.5)

Figure 7. Communication competence and business knowhow.

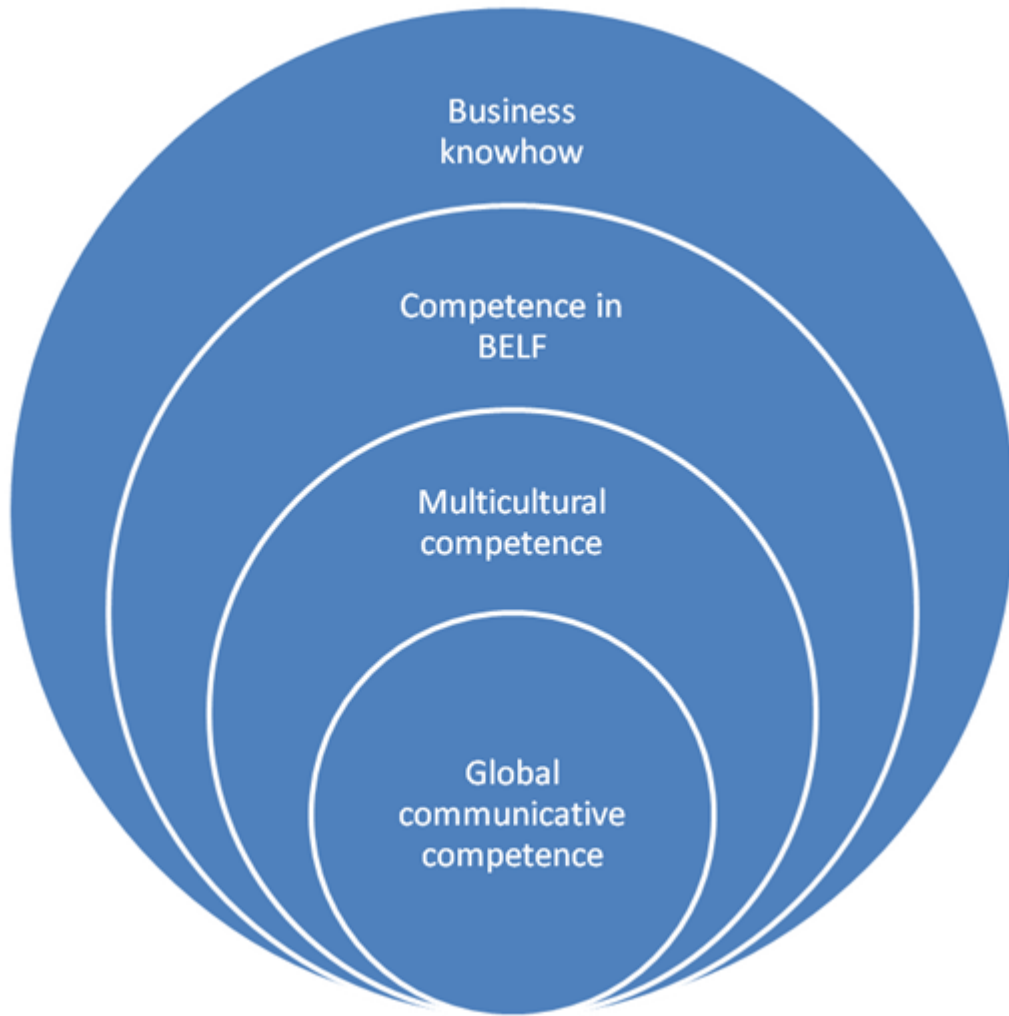


Figure 8. Model of Global Communicative Competence in a business context

Company	No of recipients	No of respondents	Response rate
A	469	359	77%
B	62	46	74%
C	1281	507	40%
D	38	31	82%
E	66	44	67%
Total	1916	987	52%

Table I. Response rates in the five surveyed companies.